

Mound House Upcoming Outdoor Nature & Education Events: Thursday, June 24 Through Saturday, July 3, 2021

By Gary Mooney

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Get ready to start your upcoming Fourth of July Holiday activities with a visit to the iconic Mound House on Fort Myers Beach! One of Southwest Florida's most-beloved historic attractions, the Mound House traces its roots back to the ancient Calusa of over 2,000 years ago. The Town of Fort Myers Beach operates the Mound House as a museum complex and cultural and environmental learning center that offers numerous educational programs each month, including for children. With rainy season in place, all Mound House programs conclude by mid-afternoon so your family can avoid our almost-daily downpours.

The Mound House offers the exciting new program, "Junior Explorers," for children 2 to 5 and their adult guardians at Newton Beach Park on Wednesday, June 30, at 10 a.m. and Friday, July 2, at 1 p.m. "Junior Explorers" learn about the environment, culture, and early life skills such as language, numbers, fine motor, and socializing. Newton Beach Park is mid-island at 4650 Estero Boulevard, with paid parking. New during this timeframe is "Cool Calusa Tools" for families with kids ages 6 & older on Thursday, July 1 & Saturday, July 3, at 1 p.m. Learn to hunt, fish, and make masks and pottery, just like the Calusa, in this hands-on tour at \$2-per-person that does not include Mound House admission. There are two different kayak programs this week, along with the Mound House's signature event, the "Shell Mound Outside Guided Tour," on eight occasions.

The Mound House, the oldest standing structure on Estero Island, is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. It recommends that all non-vaccinated COVID-19 visitors wear masks, with Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines in place. The Mound House is at 451 Connecticut Street with overflow parking at 216 Connecticut. Admission is \$10 for ages 13 & up, \$8 for students with IDs, \$5 ages 6 to 12, and 5 & under free, with Town residents receiving a 50% discount. For information, reservations, and a monthly programs schedule, call 239-765-0865 or see www.moundhouse.org.

FREE "Newton Beach Park Guided Beach Walk"

For all ages every Tuesday and Thursday weather permitting at 9 a.m.

This twice-weekly free outdoor nature program is different every single time, as the "Guided Beach Walks" have a simple premise – the groups walk roughly a half-mile down the beach and back, discussing whatever you find that particular morning. Meet at the thatched hut closest to the beach, with CDC guidelines in place. Bring sunscreen, shoes to get wet, sunglasses, and hat. No reservations necessary; while free, parking is \$3-per-hour, with one hour generally enough. Newton Beach Park is mid-island at 4650 Estero Boulevard.

“Garden Outside Guided Tour”

For all ages on Thursday, June 24 & Tuesday, June 29, at 10 a.m.; & Saturday, July 3, at 11 a.m.

Stroll through the Mound House gardens to discover how its unique plants conserve water and protect wildlife, while learning how the Calusa and other Native Americans used them in their daily lives. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission; Mound House members free, with CDC guidelines in place.

“Shell Mound” Outside Guided Tour

For all ages on Thursday, June 24 & Saturday, June 26, at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.; Tuesday, June 29, at 2 p.m.; Thursday, July 1, at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.; & Saturday, July 3, at 2 p.m.

If you dig archaeology, the Mound House’s signature program is for you! Tour the 2,000-year-old Calusa Indian Shell Mound led by the Interpretive Staff as you explore the site’s archaeology to unearth clues about this ancient society. The Mound House recommends that all non-vaccinated COVID-19 visitors wear masks, with CDC guidelines in place. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission; Mound House members free.

“Family Fun Kayak Tour”

For ages 6 & up weather permitting on Friday, June 25 and Saturday, July 3, at 9 a.m.

Fun for the whole family on a specially-designed Environmental Educator-guided kayak tour for families with children age 6 & up! See birds, dolphins, manatee, and other wildlife while paddling through the Estero Bay mangroves. \$25-per-person ages 13 & up; \$15-per-person ages 6 to 12, with advance registrations necessary. The Mound House provides all equipment, with CDC guidelines in place.

“Mangroves by Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Saturday, June 26; Wednesday, June 30; and Friday, July 2, all at 9 a.m.

Explore the winding mangrove creeks and hidden waters of the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve as only a kayaker can on this Environmental Educator-guided tour of the ancient realm of the Calusa! Witness birds, fish, manatee and dolphins as you paddle through the natural beauty of Estero and Hell Peckney Bays in a tandem kayak. All paddling & safety equipment provided, with kayak tours in accordance with Florida Society of Ethical Ecotourism guidelines. \$45-per-person; Mound House members \$15. Advance reservations necessary & private tours available, with CDC guidelines in place.

NEW: “Junior Explorers” at Newton Beach Park

For children 2 to 5 with their adult guardians on Wednesday, June 30, at 10 a.m.; & Friday, July 2, at 1 p.m.

Your Junior Explorer will investigate Newton Beach Park to learn about the natural environment, culture, and early life skills such as language, numbers, fine motor, and socializing during this 30-minute program, featuring topics like “Counting With Nature,” “Animals of The Estuary,” “Paint Making,” “Calusa Masks,” “Calusa Pottery,” and “Sorting Shells.” \$2-per-child, with adult guardians and Mound House members free; no reservations necessary and CDC guidelines in place. Newton Beach Park is mid-island at 4650 Estero Boulevard, with parking at \$3-per-hour.

NEW “Cool Calusa Tools”

For families with kids ages 6 & older on Thursday, July 1 & Saturday, July 3, at 1 p.m.

Learn to hunt, fish, and make masks and pottery, just like the Calusa! The Mound House interpretive staff leads the exciting and hands-on tour of the Mound House grounds where they demonstrate Calusa tools and artifacts, then help you make Calusa-inspired artwork where your imagination runs wild! \$2-per-person that does not include Mound House admission. The Mound House enforces Social Distancing guidelines and recommends that all unvaccinated COVID-19 visitors wear masks.